



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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EPA proposes new ozone standard

BATON ROUGE – The United States Environmental Protection Agency today proposed to set the “primary” ozone standard, which protects public health, at a level between 60-70 parts per billion measured over eight hours. EPA is also proposing to set a separate “secondary” seasonal standard to protect the environment, especially plants and trees.

EPA will take public comment for 60 days after the proposed rule is published in the Federal Register. DEQ staff is evaluating the proposal to determine the potential impacts on the state.

A proposed revision to the standard for ozone was announced March 2008. On Sept. 16, 2009, EPA announced it was reconsidering that decision. By law, EPA is required to re-evaluate standards for certain pollutants every five years. With today’s proposed change, approximately 28 parishes would not meet the newly proposed standard range. These parishes may be designated as nonattainment when the new standard is finalized.

“Today’s announcement by the EPA does not mean that the air quality in Louisiana is worse than it was yesterday,” said DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett. “In fact, the air quality in Louisiana is the best it has ever been. For two consecutive years, the Baton Rouge area, which was the only area of the state in nonattainment, has met both the now revoked 1-hour as well as the more stringent 8-hour ozone standard. This is a great accomplishment for our state. We’ll continue to do what is best for the state’s environment.”

The EPA requires areas that do not meet air quality standards to implement more restrictive regulations in an effort to lower the overall air pollution levels. With a new standard, some industries and businesses may be required to obtain permits to control the amount of pollutants emitted to the air. Industries and businesses seeking to expand operations may have to take additional measures or face new restrictions to help control air pollution.

Ozone is not emitted. It is an air pollutant that is formed when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides combine to react with sunlight. The chemicals needed to form ozone come from a variety of sources, such as cars, industrial and manufacturing operations, paint and body shops, bakeries, dry cleaners, as well as from lawn and recreational equipment.

Historically, the Baton Rouge nonattainment area was the only area in the state that did not comply with the ozone standard. However, the area monitored attainment in December 2008 for both the 1-hour and the 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS. Data from 2009 indicates that the area has continued to meet attainment standards.

To view maps of possible nonattainment areas, tips on the voluntary steps you can take to improve air quality and to see what consequences there may be for a nonattainment, go to www.deq.louisiana.gov.